

Verification Chronology and Source Guide

Hillsdale Public-Comment Identification Dispute

Purpose

This document provides a concise chronology of the relevant meetings, government actions, and available supporting records concerning Lance Lashaway's attempts to speak during public comment without publicly stating his name.

It is intended as a verification guide for an editor or reporter. It does not ask the publication to accept either party's legal conclusions.

May 4, 2026

Hillsdale City Council

Event

Lance Lashaway attempted to participate in public comment without publicly stating his name.

City officials maintained that identification was required.

The city's written rule at that time reportedly stated that a speaker's name was "requested," rather than "required."

Lashaway was not permitted to complete his public comment anonymously.

Questions for verification

1. What was the exact wording of the public-comment rule on May 4?
2. Who interpreted "requested" as a mandatory requirement?
3. Had the council previously voted to make identification mandatory?
4. What legal authority was cited during or after the meeting?
5. Was Lashaway warned that he could be removed or arrested?

Available or relevant records

- May 4 City Council meeting video
- May 4 agenda and minutes
- Version of the council rules in effect on May 4
- Statements by the mayor, city attorney, clerk, or city manager
- Correspondence following the meeting

June 1, 2026

Hillsdale City Council

Event

Lashaway again attempted to participate in public comment without stating his name.

The council considered whether he should be allowed to speak.

A motion to permit him to continue reportedly failed.

Lashaway was removed from the meeting.

Later during the same meeting, the council voted to amend its rules so that providing a name was required, no longer requested.

Questions for verification

1. What motion was made concerning Lashaway's ability to speak?
2. How did each council member vote?
3. Who ordered or requested his removal?
4. What conduct was identified as disruptive?
5. Was he removed for refusing to state his name, refusing an instruction, disrupting the meeting, or another stated reason?
6. What was the exact wording of the rule before and after the amendment?
7. Did the city attorney provide legal advice before the removal or rule change?
8. Why was an amendment necessary if the prior rule already imposed a mandatory requirement?

Available or relevant records

- June 1 City Council meeting video
- June 1 agenda and minutes
- Roll-call or recorded council votes
- Rule language before amendment
- Adopted rule amendment
- Police incident report
- Body-camera recordings
- Communications between city officials and police
- Communications involving the city attorney

June 23, 2026

Hillsdale County Board of Commissioners

Event

Lashaway attempted to participate in county public comment without publicly stating his name.

County officials maintained that the county's meeting rules required identification.

Lashaway was denied the opportunity to speak.

Hillsdale City Police removed him from the meeting.

Statements during or after the incident reportedly referred to police or county prosecutor advice.

Lashaway was subsequently warned that repeating the conduct could result in criminal charges, arrest, or jail.

Questions for verification

1. What was the exact county rule in effect on June 23?
2. Did the rule state that a speaker "may address" the board after giving a name, or did it expressly make identification mandatory?
3. Who ordered or requested Lashaway's removal?
4. What specific conduct was identified as a disruption or breach of the peace?
5. What offense was considered as a possible basis for arrest?
6. What advice did the county prosecutor provide, when was it provided, and to whom?
7. Did police independently assess whether probable cause existed?
8. Was Lashaway warned before removal?

Available or relevant records

- June 23 Board of Commissioners meeting video
- County agenda and minutes
- County board rules in effect on June 23
- Hillsdale City Police report
- Body-camera recordings
- Dispatch records
- Communications between county officials and city police
- Communications involving the county prosecutor
- Written warnings or follow-up correspondence

July 20, 2026**Hillsdale City Council****Event**

Lashaway again attempted to participate in public comment without publicly stating his name.

The amended city rule expressly requiring identification remained in effect.

The mayor did not permit Lashaway to deliver his public comment.

The possibility of allowing Lashaway to speak was raised.

Four council members voted to allow Lashaway to speak.

Lashaway remained in the meeting, and the meeting continued.

Questions for verification

1. Which four council members voted to allow Lashaway to speak?
2. What reasons did they provide?
3. Did the mayor or another official request police intervention?
4. Did police advise against removal?
5. Was Lashaway's conduct materially different from his conduct at the earlier meetings?
6. If the conduct was the same, why was removal not considered necessary on July 20?
7. Did the meeting continue without a breach of the peace?
8. Does the city distinguish between denying public comment and removing a person from the meeting?

Available or relevant records

- July 20 City Council meeting video
- July 20 agenda and minutes
- Statements by the four council members
- Statements by the mayor
- Police video or reports, if officers were present or contacted
- Correspondence following the meeting

Comparative Questions

The following questions arise from comparing the four incidents:

1. Was identification legally required before the city amended its rule on June 1?
2. Does declining to state a name, without additional conduct, constitute a disruption or breach of the peace?
3. What is the distinction between denying a person the opportunity to speak and removing the person from the meeting?

4. If Lashaway could peacefully remain on July 20, why was physical removal necessary at the earlier meetings?
5. Were the earlier removal decisions based on a written policy, individualized judgment, police advice, prosecutorial advice, or direction from elected officials?
6. What process is used to determine whether noncompliance with a meeting rule becomes grounds for removal or arrest?
7. Were the rules applied consistently across meetings and speakers?
8. Did officials consider constitutional protections for anonymous political speech and petitioning government?
9. Did officials consider the limitations imposed by Michigan's Open Meetings Act or other applicable state law?
10. What procedural safeguard prevents a chairperson from using a meeting rule to exclude peaceful criticism?

Suggested Interview Subjects

The publication may wish to request written responses from:

- Lance Lashaway
- Mayor Scott Sessions
- The four council members who opposed or questioned removal on July 20
- The remaining City Council members
- Hillsdale City Manager David Mackie
- The Hillsdale city attorney
- Hillsdale City Police leadership
- Hillsdale County Board Chair Mark Wiley
- The county administrator or clerk
- Hillsdale County Prosecutor Jamie Wisniewski
- An independent First Amendment or constitutional-law scholar
- An independent Michigan Open Meetings Act specialist

Neutral Framing

The central reporting question is not whether a meeting chair may maintain order. The issue is where lawful maintenance of order ends and unconstitutional exclusion begins.

The city and county may argue that identification is a reasonable condition of participating in a limited public-comment forum and that refusal to comply interferes with orderly procedure.

Lashaway argues that a peaceful citizen may not be denied the right to petition government anonymously and that refusing to comply with an allegedly unlawful condition does not, by itself, constitute a breach of the peace.

The documentary record allows those competing positions to be examined without requiring the publication to adopt either side's conclusion in advance.